

# State Representative Terry Goodin

Helping Hoosier Families

113th Indiana General Assembly, Spring 2004

## Session Report



Property  
Tax Relief



Prescription  
Drug Costs



Job  
Creation





## 113th General Assembly Ends

Dear Friends,

The 2004 short session of the Indiana General Assembly has ended. I have detailed several important pieces of legislation in this newsletter, including property tax relief, job creation and increased access to affordable prescription drugs.

I hope you find this information useful, and I will keep you updated over the next few months on other legislation that should have a positive impact on you and your family. Please contact me if you have any questions or concerns about state government.

Sincerely,

*Terry L. Goodrich*



# Property Tax Relief

When the Indiana General Assembly restructured our state's tax code in 2002, one goal from that effort was to give homeowners relief from the court-ordered reassessment. As the first series of assessments was completed, it became apparent that homeowners were facing an increasingly larger share of the burden passed to them by Indiana's courts.

Because of their concerns, House members led an effort to begin the 2004 session ahead of time. Starting in November, legislators began discussions on additional reforms that resulted in passage of Senate Enrolled Act 1, which contains nearly **\$500 million in protection for homeowners, businesses and farms from property tax increases**. It provides additional protections from the court-ordered reassessment and property tax increases.

When lawmakers returned in January, our efforts resumed to give tax relief to the people who needed it the most. We were able to pass another

measure (Senate Enrolled Act 296) that increases **property tax deductions for seniors on lower incomes, veterans, the blind and disabled**, as well as those who are rehabilitating homes.

House Enrolled Act 1005 takes additional steps to find other means of financing government services. One study committee will explore alternatives to property tax, while another will examine the efficiency of local government operations.

This measure also sets up the groundwork for keeping property taxpayers better informed. A pilot program getting under way in 2005 will provide taxpayers in certain counties with detailed breakdowns on their **tax statements that will show where their tax dollars are being used**.

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## Additional Bills Passed

There were several other significant pieces of legislation passed by the General Assembly.

House Bill 1029 will allow a custodial parent to bring a court action to **recover delinquent child support payments** by intercepting the state income tax return of the parent responsible for the obligation.

House Bill 1229, called The Indiana Homeowner Protection Act, places **tougher restrictions on the practice called predatory lending**. Homeowners will be protected from overpriced loans with unreasonable terms that often are impossible to pay back, placing people at risk of losing their homes through foreclosure.

House Bill 1257 prohibits a political subdivision employer from disciplining an employee who is a **volunteer firefighter** for being absent from work when the employee is responding to a fire or other emergency call.

House Bill 1306 will allow members, survivors, and beneficiaries of the **Public Employees' Retirement Fund (PERF)** and Teacher's Retirement Fund (TRF) to receive a cost-of-living adjustment beginning in 2005.

House Bill 1285 will require the Pension Management Oversight Commission to **study the feasibility** of authorizing members of the retirement funds administered by the Board of Trustees of PERF to withdraw, before retired, a members contributions when the member demonstrates an immediate and great financial need.

House Bill 1349 will require an offender to submit certain documentation to the court before filing a tort claim against a government entity. This action is an attempt to prevent frivolous law suits. It will also protect homeowners from civil liability if a criminal steals their firearm and commits a crime.



# Helping Hoosier Families



## Medication Savings

### Hoosiers Gain Access to Affordable Prescription Drugs

Legislators also worked hard to protect Hoosiers from the rising costs of prescription drugs. Under a plan approved this session, more than **400,000 Hoosiers would gain access to affordable prescription drugs**, with many more qualifying in years to come.

House Bill 1265 enables the state to set up an aggregate prescription drug purchasing program to negotiate the prices of prescription drugs from phar-

maceutical companies. **Indiana will also be able to enter into joint purchasing agreements with other states, gaining added bargaining power.**

People who sign up for the program will get a prescription drug card to receive the savings when they fill their prescriptions at their local drugstores. This program will simplify the lives of many and improve the conditions for people on fixed and limited incomes.

## Driver's License Issues

House Bill 1254 deals with various matters regarding drivers licensing. The bill allows the Bureau of Motor Vehicles to adopt rules to comply with federal requirements concerning background checks for an individual seeking a hazardous materials endorsement for a Commercial Driver's License.

The bill also specifies that an individual who is less than 18-years-old and holds a valid learner's permit—or is currently enrolled in an approved driver's education course—may drive a motor vehicle when the seat beside the driver's seat is occupied by a stepparent of the permit holder who holds a valid operator's license.

## Fighting Drug, Alcohol Abuses

### Working for Real Solutions

**L**awmakers spent a lot of time this session trying to come up with real solutions to the problems brought on by the abuse of drugs and alcohol throughout Indiana. Among the most prominent concerns was the new wave of production and use of methamphetamine sweeping through the state.

Criminals favor this drug because of its low cost, simple manufacture and easy accessibility. Another major problem the legislators resolved to face was the occurrence of drunk driving on roadways.

**House Bill 1136** creates a task force to combat the production, distribution and use of methamphetamine in Indiana. The task force will suggest specific actions to lessen the demand and decrease the supply of meth, improve the enforcement of meth laws, and evaluate the success of programs in other states to make recommendations for improving local, state and federal laws in Indiana.

**House Bill 1264** is aimed at keep-

ing drunk drivers off the road. It requires an ignition interlock system, which works by screening a driver's breath in order to start the vehicle, be installed in a repeat offender's vehicle. The system will detect if a driver attempts to start the vehicle by circumventing the breath test. The car horn

will activate and continue to sound until the vehicle is shut off. The system will then lock the auto down for a predetermined period of time.

**House Bill 1394** charges anyone 21 years of age or older with a Class B felony for causing

the death of another person while operating a vehicle under the influence of drugs or alcohol. In addition, anyone who operates a vehicle under the influence, and with at least one passenger under the age of 18, will be charged with a Class D felony. Anyone with two convictions of causing death while intoxicated and operating a vehicle will have their license suspended for life.



Representatives Terry Goodin (left) and Scott Pelath review legislation.

# Helping Hoosier Families



Representative Terry Goodin (center) discusses legislation with Representative Russ Stilwell in the chamber of the House of Representatives.

## Contact Representative Terry Goodin

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## Creating Hoosier Jobs

**P**rotecting and creating Hoosier jobs and businesses were among the issues of most concern in the 2004 General Assembly. Three bills and a resolution were passed that will aid in the retention and creation of jobs as well as encourage business development and corporate responsibility.

House Resolution 47 calls on the president and Congress to address a growing trade imbalance that has resulted in the loss of more than 2 million manufacturing jobs in the U.S. since 2001. It asks that **trade agreements require that corporations pay fair and competitive wages**, respect the rights of workers to unionize, and adopt workplace safety and anti-pollution standards equal to those in our country. The resolution also encourages the federal government to **provide economic incentives to sectors that have seen record job losses** due to NAFTA, and address the adverse effects on trade caused by countries that artificially lower the value of their currency relative to the dollar.

House Bill 1080 will help **stimulate Indiana's economy** by providing a price preference to Indiana businesses for public works and procurement contracts. This piece of legislation will focus on Indiana companies first as suppliers for goods and services the state is interested in purchasing.

House Bill 1434 will **benefit low-income businesses by fostering economic development opportunities** by providing grants for training and technical assistance. The microenterprise partnership program created under the bill will provide assistance to businesses with fewer than five employees.

House Bill 1365 will make the state's research and development tax credit permanent, extend the life of the Hoosier Business Investment Tax Credit and create a new fund to encourage investment in new technology. It also calls for a study of **eliminating corporate tax loopholes in current Indiana law** that cause tax increases on Hoosier homeowners and businesses.

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## Rep. Terry Goodin

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